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INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002063

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, SEMEP, AND IPA; NSC FOR  
SHAPIRO/KUMAR; JOINT STAFF FOR LTGEN SELVA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: PLAN FOR NEW ISRAELI NEIGHBORHOOD IN EAST  
JERUSALEM MOVES ONE STEP CLOSER TO REALITY

REF: A. JERUSALEM 1756  
[1](#)B. 08 JERUSALEM 303

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein  
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) NGO and Jerusalem municipality contacts separately confirmed to Post on November 17 that the Jerusalem District Planning Board approved the "Mordot Gilo" plan for construction of 844 residential units inside the Jerusalem municipal borders, and adjacent to the existing East Jerusalem settlement of Gilo. The new neighborhood is slated to be built on land expropriated for the Gilo settlement in the 1970s but as yet undeveloped. ("Mordot Gilo" is Hebrew for "Downward Slopes of Gilo," reflecting the proposed neighborhood's location.) The plan is the first proposal for East Jerusalem settlement construction on public lands to be submitted or approved at the District level since Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's government took office, according to an NGO source.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The planned construction would extend the footprint of the current Gilo settlement downhill to the southwest, towards the Palestinian village of al-Wallaja, and towards the site of the long-proposed Givat Yael settlement (which would separate al-Wallaja from Green Line Israel; Ref A). According to standard Israeli planning procedures (Ref B), announcement of the approval will now be published in Hebrew and Arabic-language newspapers, and the plan will be deposited for a 60-day period of public review. After this 60-day period, the plan will be returned by the District Planning Board to the Jerusalem Municipal Land Planning Board (a subcommittee of the City Council), which would then hold a public meeting before finally approving the plan (with or without changes) or rejecting it.

[1](#)3. (C) Khalil Tufakji of the Arab Studies Society told Post that the Board's actions were an attempt to increase the Jerusalem municipality's Jewish population and create "facts on the ground" that put Palestinians at a disadvantage. Post contacts in the Israeli anti-settlement NGO community were similarly critical, labeling the plan a "provocation," and arguing that it represented a clear rejection by the GOI of principles of "restraint" in settlement building. Shortly after the District Planning Board issued its decision, Mayor Nir Barkat issued a press release "strongly objecting" to the "American demand to halt construction in Jerusalem, and noting that "the Jerusalem Municipality will continue to allow construction in all parts of the city for Jews, Muslims, and Christians, based on the same law."

RUBINSTEIN